

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLP #0867/01 1612216
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 102216Z JUN 09
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0988
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 9060
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 6442
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0416
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 7626
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 4672
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN 0522
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 5008
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 6319
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 7290
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 2054
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 1796
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 000867

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/11/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [ENVR](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: BOLIVIA: NEIGHBOR RELATIONS NOT SO NEIGHBORLY

REF: A. LIMA 810
[1](#)B. LIMA 794

Classified By: A/EcoPol Chief Joe Relk for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Bolivian President Evo Morales and his ruling Movement Toward Socialism party (MAS) are enmeshed in diplomatic flaps with neighbors, including: a growing feud with Peru over asylum approvals for four former GOB ministers and allegations of GOB support for a June 5 Peruvian indigenous uprising in which two dozen police were killed; an illegal GOB police arrest in Paraguay; and GOB anger concerning Brazil's apparent decision to grant asylum to 118 Bolivians fleeing GOB prosecution related to the September 2008 Pando conflict. Meanwhile, Chilean diplomatic sources affirm that while the GOB's relationship with Chile continues to improve, Chile will ultimately not grant what the GOB really wants: a corridor to the Pacific. While Morales is known for fanning the flames of international disputes to his domestic political advantage, this time the disagreements do not appear to be playing to his benefit. End summary.

- - - - -
Peru: Extraditions, Border Disputes, and Revolution
- - - - -

[1](#)2. (U) Relations between Bolivia and Peru's governments have been steadily declining for over a year. Morales and Peruvian President Alan Garcia are engaged in a long-running tiff, marked by a June 2008 episode in which Morales called Garcia "fat" and "not very anti-imperialist." Garcia replied by asking publicly why Morales "just doesn't shut up." In a more recent March 26 outburst, President Morales accused Garcia of filing a claim at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding Peru's maritime border with Chile for "personal and partisan political gain," saying "perhaps he has become so fat that it has affected (his thinking)." While the GOP has stressed that the sole purpose of the ICJ case is to remove a significant barrier to further economic integration with Chile, for the GOB the filing is an irritant, as it ignores Bolivia's desire to regain territory lost in the War of the Pacific and may delay in GOB negotiations with Chile to regain access to the Pacific. Regarding the case, Morales said that, "I have information that the Peruvian government knows that it is going to lose

the demand... They made the demand in order to punish Bolivia."

13. (C) In a conversation with Poloff, diplomatic contacts at the Peruvian embassy denied Morales' accusations that the case was done to "punish Bolivia," but confirmed they did not expect a final decision by the IJC for up to five years. One of the diplomats, who served in Chile for several years, opined that he could not imagine Chile ever giving Bolivia territorial access to the Pacific ocean.

14. (C) Adding fuel to the fire, in early May four ex-ministers who served under former Bolivian President Gonzalo "Goni" Sanchez de Lozada fled to Peru and sought asylum, which the GOP granted. (Note: The GOB is actively moving forward in a Bolivian Supreme Court case against Goni and several ex-ministers for the deaths of approximately 60 people in October 2003. End Note.) Morales called Garcia "vulgar" for granting the asylum (even though the UN High Commission on Human Rights actually found the individuals had a well-founded fear of persecution in at least two of the cases) and called for the ex-ministers' immediate extradition. GOB-aligned social groups in El Alto threatened to retaliate by expelling up to 10,000 Peruvian city residents, according to Peruvian community leader Jose Luis Quintana, but later "suspended" the decision. Peruvian embassy sources noted that for all the GOB's extradition demands, the GOB has refused to extradite dozens of suspected Peruvian terrorists. The contacts confirmed they did not believe the ex-ministers, much less Goni, could receive a fair trial in Bolivia.

15. (U) In the latest conflict, President Morales on May 29 delivered a letter to an indigenous congress in Puno (an area in southern Peru bordering on Bolivia), in which he said: "Our struggle does not end. From resistance we are moving forward to rebellion, and from rebellion to revolution. This is the time for the second and definitive independence." The GOP interpreted the text as a call for indigenous peoples to rebel against the Garcia government, especially as the comments came during a two-month strike by thousands of indigenous protesters in northern Peru opposed to GOP measures related to the proposed U.S. - Peru Free Trade Agreement. A GOB spokesman said that Morales could not be held responsible, because the letter was not addressed specifically to indigenous Peruvians but to Congress members. However, the organizer of the Congress had earlier announced that the purpose of the congress was to "elect a Peruvian Evo Morales."

16. (C) On June 5, the strike erupted into violence when approximately 500 indigenous strikers killed up to two dozen police officers, executing many of them after they had surrendered (reftel A). The GOP blamed Morales for inciting the violence, and Peruvian government contacts claimed the GOB supported the social groups involved in the violence (reftel B). GOB spokespersons heatedly denied any connection. Media reports on June 9 stated that seven suspected strike participants were detained by Peruvian police in Puno with 9,500 USD. The men were reportedly unable to explain how they had come to possess the relatively large sum of money.

17. (U) On June 10, news sources quoted Peruvian Ambassador Hugo de Zela Hurtado as saying that Peru would likely make a formal statement to the Organization of American States and the UN decrying Morales' interference in internal Peruvian affairs. Other news sources suggested Peru could withdraw their Ambassador in Bolivia as a mark of protest. News sources also reported that approximately 100 members of MAS-aligned social groups protested in front of the Peruvian embassy on June 9, with social leaders blaming the Peruvian government for the deaths of over 30 indigenous individuals. Campesino leader and Morales ally Isaac Avalos called President Garcia a "genocidal murderer."

- - - - -
Brazil: Asylum for 118 Bolivians?

- - - - -

¶8. (U) Local media reported June 7 that Brazil's National Council for Refugees agreed to give asylum to 118 Bolivians allegedly involved in the September 11, 2008 conflict in Bolivia's Pando department (state) in which an estimated nine campesinos and two department workers died. The Brazilian government has not officially confirmed this decision. Initial press coverage of the issue was spurred by the June 5 statements made by Brazilian Minister of Justice, Taso Genro, who defended the granting of refugee status to the Pandinos based on the argument that "these are common people, workers, businessmen. It does not matter to us whether they are fleeing from conflicts from the (political) left or the right." It is not clear whether or to what degree the Brazilian Council is working with the UN High Commission on Human Rights (UNHCR) in offering the asylum. Bolivian Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera on June 8 called upon the Brazilian government to act within the framework of justice and of international treaties concerning refugees. He said the GOB would deliver "pertinent information" about the case in hopes that the Brazilian government would not grant asylum. MAS Congress Deputy Gustavo Torrico said "there has been an excessive abuse and trampling of the UNHCR's rules on granting asylum. If the UNHCR does this act, they are protecting assassins, violators of human rights."

- - - - -

Paraguay: Illegal Troop Incursions

- - - - -

¶9. (U) After President Morales called Paraguayan President Fernando Lugo June 4 to assure him that GOB police forces had not entered Paraguayan territory to make an arrest in a May 16 robbery case, GOB Government Minister Alfredo Rada admitted June 9 that it appeared Bolivian police had in fact done so, and apparently with the cooperation of a Paraguayan military official. Paraguayan Vice President Federico Franco had rejected the GOB's denials, saying: "I believe more in what (Armed Forces Commander-in-Chief Benitez) told us. He provided a detailed report after having been in the place... It is a very serious matter for two reasons. First, the violation of our territory and then the participation of one of our army officials. This is why we agreed with the Commander-in-Chief's decision to institute legal proceedings."

¶10. (U) As part of an apology to the Paraguayan government, Rada explained that the Bolivian border police commander had not correctly reported where the arrest took place, and that he had been fired for doing so. President Morales will discuss the incident further with President Lugo during an upcoming visit to Asuncion June 12.

- - - - -

Chile: No Access to the Pacific

- - - - -

¶11. (C) The Chilean Consul confirmed to PolOff that while relations had improved between the GOB and the Chilean government, GOB desires for a corridor to the sea would likely never be realized. The Consul said Presidents Morales and Bachelet speak so regularly Chilean MFA officers call Morales her "phone buddy." Economic and military exchanges are up, he continued, and even an official exchange of Ambassadors could be forthcoming. "We are practically an Embassy already, we will already have military, police, and press attaches this year; it is only a matter of time (until exchange of formal and full diplomatic missions)."

¶12. (C) The Consul said during the first year of the Morales Administration bilateral relations were "difficult at a working level." Chileans would offer what they felt were generous compromises to the Bolivians, only to have the Bolivians "demand everything," he said. "You have to recognize that Evo Morales is not used to diplomatic negotiation, he is used to a much tougher form of negotiation" learned as a cocalero labor union leader. "Once

we understood how they operate, we realized that complete intransigence was always the starting point" regardless of the proposal. When the Chileans adopted less reasonable opening positions and a more conciliatory tone, the Consul said they gained some respect with their Bolivian counterparts and "started making progress."

¶13. (C) Although the Consul said the GOC "won't agree to divide Chile" in order to provide Bolivia access to the Pacific Ocean, he said establishing a Bolivian port enclave in Arica was "possible." He discounted consideration of any other port location. The Chileans, he asserted, would pursue a strategy of slowly rolling out agreements on less contentious issues (water rights/Silala River, border demining, economic engagement) in order to placate the Bolivians on the issue of regaining access to the Pacific. He said the Chileans would try to "make reasonable arguments" to the Bolivians in the meantime that it is not in their own best interests to regain lost territory "that they cannot manage." He argued that if the Bolivians got what they wanted, a swath of territory linking them to the ocean, they "couldn't afford to build up or maintain" the transportation infrastructure needed to properly service a connection to a port. He said the Bolivians would do better economically to accept a deal with the Chileans for port access, with the Chileans financing road and rail improvements. He recognized the sea access issue had the potential to reverse bilateral progress, but hoped that visible benefits from improved trade relations would soften the Bolivian position over time.

¶14. (SBU) However, Foreign Minister David Choquehuanca appears to be running out of patience concerning sea access, stating June 4 that "the time for truth" on the matter with Chile has arrived. Although he also recently highlighted good relations with Chile and said he was "satisfied " with efforts during the first three years of the Morales Administration to build trust, he added that the time for resolution of Bolivia's desire for sea access issue should be at hand and that "no foreign factors will hinder that desire."

- - - -
Comment
- - - -

¶15. (C) President Morales has made a regular habit of inflaming relations with other countries to rally his domestic political support, whether by "playing the victim" or cultivating a posture of "Bolivia vs. the world." This time, however, the political costs seem to have outweighed any benefits. While the GOB's relationship with Peru has been deteriorating for some time, "friendlier" countries such as Brazil and Paraguay took a surprisingly firm stand against the GOB. Additionally, although relations with Chile have significantly improved, it seems ill-disposed to grant Morales' dream of regaining access to the sea. If Bolivia seeks, with Venezuela, to export its socialist revolution to Peru, it may be advised to mend fences with its other neighbors first. End Comment.
URS